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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 LILONGWE 000320

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [IO](#) [MI](#)
SUBJECT: MALAWI PKO - MOD RULES OUT SOMALIA, SUDAN A
POSSIBILITY

REF: A. SECSTATE 51828
[B](#). LILONGWE 84
[C](#). LILONGWE 203
[D](#). LILONGWE 299

[1](#). (SBU) Summary: Ambassador Eastham met with Minister of Defense Davies Katsonga and separately with Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Henri Mumba on April 24 to renew our request that Malawi commit to sending a battalion of peacekeepers to join either the AMISOM or AMIS peacekeeping operations. Both officials effectively ruled out Malawi's participation in AMISOM, while Katsonga (as he has often done) assured the Ambassador that Malawi is "ready for Darfur." He could not, however, provide a timeline for joining the mission. Mumba was much more conservative, noting that any decision to join the AMIS mission would have to be made above the ministerial level, by the President and his Cabinet. Katsonga, who has previously gotten himself into trouble by getting too far ahead of President Mutharika on peacekeeping deployments (reftel B), however promised to have a timeline for deployment to the Ambassador within a week. We'll be seeing him again on Thursday, April 26, at his request. In a subsequent meeting on April 25, Chief Secretary Bright Msaka suggested that once financial details

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were ironed out for an AMIS deployment, a push by Assistant Secretary Frazer might finally persuade Mutharika to act. We

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still hold out hope that if financial and equipment issues can be addressed, the Malawians could eventually decide to put a battalion into AMIS. End Summary.

[2](#). (SBU) Ambassador Eastham first met with MOD Katsonga, who had returned April 23 from a trip to Addis Ababa to discuss peacekeeping operations. The Ambassador complimented the Malawi Defence Force's abilities, noting the substantial investment made by the United States to prepare Malawi's forces for PKO operations. He used the points in ref A to urge Malawi to decide favorably as soon as possible, and if a decision was made to send troops to AMIS, to make a public announcement of the decision. The Ambassador reiterated (per emails from AF/RA Bittrick) that some U.S. funding, up to \$1 million per battalion, could possibly be made available for equipment needed by the MDF to support the deployment. The

Ambassador said we could work on what form this (no weapons/no ammunition) would take, perhaps by providing it to the MDF in situ in Darfur or by delivering it in Malawi to replace consumables.

¶3. (SBU) As Katsonga described his meetings in Addis, it became clear that the GOM has substantial reservations about the Somalia mission. Katsonga said that the African Union was not prepared for what is now happening in Somalia. He strongly stressed the point that not enough is being done diplomatically to bring the two sides together, with the result that the prospects are good for continued lethal combat. This, he said, meant that any troops sent into the present situation would be engaged in combat, not peacekeeping. He also complained that during that trip to Addis, the Director of the Peace and Security Committee claimed he had no information regarding casualties in Somalia. Katsonga said he found this exceedingly strange, that the AU would not be able to describe to a potential contributor the scale of the violence in terms of casualties suffered by. Finally, Katsonga said there seemed to be a reluctance by the U.N. to fund AMISOM, which did not lend confidence to the mission. For these reasons, Katsonga said the GOM had decided that it would be better to attempt to positively influence the political dialogue, rather than to deploy its forces to join the mission. Katsonga said the GOM had requested a meeting of the Peace and Security Committee within the next three weeks to discuss these issues.

¶4. (SBU) Katsonga then moved on to the AMIS mission in Darfur, first discussing the various political issues surrounding the conflict. He again expressed concern that not enough effort had been made at "bringing together" the various factions, stating that while a lot of pressure had been put on the government of Sudan, equal pressure had not been placed on the "rebel Forces." Katsonga then contradicted himself, stating sympathy for those who have

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lost their lives, criticizing President Bashir and asking "when is enough enough?" The Ambassador reminded the Minister that a decision by Malawi to send its forces to AMIS would answer the question, putting Malawi on the side of those who wanted peace in Sudan and who were willing to protect the civilian population in Darfur.

¶5. (SBU) Addressing the AMIS mission itself, Katsonga said the GOM wanted to see "how serious Bashir is in agreeing to a hybrid force." However, he went on to state that the GOM has a "full battalion trained and on stand-by to deploy." Katsonga noted there were some equipment issues the MOD was waiting to resolve, particularly the receipt of a number of Armored Personnel Carriers the MOD had ordered from South Africa (Comment: 12 APCs funded by Taiwan). Katsonga said it should be weeks, not months, before the MDF is fully ready to deploy. Katsonga said that he would meet with Malawi Defense Force Commander Gen. Marko Chiziko shortly to determine when the MDF will be "action-ready" for the mission. Katsonga promised to come back to the Ambassador by May 2 with a timeline for the next steps towards deployment. The Ambassador urged Katsonga to get a firm decision, communicate it to the AU and the UN, put forward a timeline, and announce it publicly in order to enable us to begin to identify what support we might be able to provide.

¶6. (SBU) During this conversation, Katsonga said that Malawi has "50" milobs deployed in Darfur at present, and that to his great surprise, during the trip to Addis he had learned they were not being paid. According to Katsonga, the answer received from the AU when he raised this question was that the money was on hand but "we need to develop a system to disburse the funds". Katsonga speculated that lack of pay and the recent casualties among AMIS forces were demoralizing the troops in that mission.

¶7. (SBU) Ambassador Eastham then met with the Deputy Minister

of Foreign Affairs Henri Mumba on the same issues. Mumba confirmed the message Katsonga had given regarding possible Malawian participation in AMISOM, and reiterated President Mutharika's statements on the mission (reftel B). Mumba, however, expressed greater reservations than Katsonga had regarding MDF participation in Darfur, stating that the GOM had not discussed additional troop commitments among the ministries. Mumba said he would pass along the request that the GOM make a public statement on their readiness to commit troops, but noted that the decision to deploy peacekeepers would be made above the ministerial level, by the President in consultation with his Cabinet.

18. (SBU) Finally, on April 25, Ambassador and DCM met over lunch with GOM Chief Secretary Bright Msaka. Msaka confirmed extreme reluctance on AMISOM and a continuing somewhat positive attitude toward Darfur. He believed that if a clear understanding of how the deployment would be funded could be reached (and this is a pre-condition for the deployment), President Mutharika could be persuaded to issue the deployment order. He thought that a meeting between President Mutharika and AF Assistant Secretary Frazer might seal the deal - once funding is worked out.

19. (SBU) Ambassador's Comment: It's now clear that Somalia is a non-starter, and the show-stopper is the prospect of heavy casualties in combat. But on the other hand, I think we are inching very slowly, one step at a time, toward a Malawian contribution to AMIS in Darfur. It is difficult to assess to what degree Malawi's equipment shortages will have to be addressed before the MDF leadership and the Ministry would recommend a "go" decision; we hope to obtain some additional information on what the MDF actually thinks it needs when we see the Minister again on Thursday afternoon. Assuming that part is reasonable, that would leave the actual movement and sustainment costs to be addressed; as President Mutharika told me (ref C), he does not want to spend any of Malawi's money for this. Addressing how this deployment will be funded is a key prerequisite to any high-level push directly toward Mutharika directly. He has high regard for Assistant Secretary Frazer and we would certainly recommend that she be engaged, perhaps by phone, in the effort, if/if

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we can get some additional clarity and assurances regarding funding. End Comment.

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